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A coming crest of water on the Des Plaines River led Prospect Heights to declare a state of emergency on Monday. City officials, along with those of Mount Prospect and Des Plaines, have been working with the Emergency Management Administration to contain the rising river.

With the Des Plaines River swollen with rain from days of driving storms, the National Weather Service predicted Monday that the river would crest at 11.3 feet Thursday - 6.3 feet above flood stage - breaking the record of 10.88 feet set Oct. 1, 1986.

River Road was closed from Milwaukee Avenue to Camp McDonald Road and will likely stay closed until Saturday, officials in Mount Prospect and Des Plaines said. Public works employees and volunteers in the two communities planned to fill 30,000 or more sandbags last week, which was expected to build a berm as tall as 6 feet running down the middle of the closed portion of River Road.

## **Optimism**

Officials in Mount Prospect and Prospect Heights said they didn't expect there would be evacuations, but residents living near the river were encouraged to take valuables out of their basements or raise them if they are on the ground floor. "We're asking people to be aware, to be prepared to evacuate if necessary," Zimmerman said.

Sandbags and pumps will probably not be necessary for individual homeowners, officials said.

"We're fortunate because after the last flood, in '87 ... we took steps for flood control," said Mount Prospect Village Manager Michael Janonis. Otherwise, the houses near the river "would already be under water," he said. A system of one-way check valves had recently been installed to keep flood water from going into the storm sewer system and then backing into the streets, Janonis said.

"The preplanning is going to pay off very nicely," Janonis said.

Starting last weekend, Mount Prospect has been using pumps to empty the storm system at the north end of the village to keep as much capacity in the system for flood water as possible, Janonis said.

Officials from Mount Prospect and Prospect Heights expressed confidence that the valves and the sandbags would prevent flooding. Janonis described as "wild cards" the possibilities of continued heavy local rain or additional water coming from further north.

Mount Prospect Mayor Gerald Farley said "the staff has been working on it since last Friday, organizing and preparing and planning. They've done and are doing everything that they can possibly do to minimize the flooding."

Farley was optimistic, but added that "you can always be surprised, as you well know, by Mother Nature."

## **Watchful eyes**

In northeast Mount Prospect, houses east of Burning Bush Lane are the most likely to be affected, village officials said. A bend in the Des Plaines river just south of Seminole Lane brings the river to within a few yards of River Road.

Mount Prospect had not declared a state of emergency early this week, but its 43-person maintenance crew went on emergency 12-hour shifts, Janonis said. Public works employees in Prospect Heights will also be helping with the work, Janonis said.

In Prospect Heights, the state of emergency gives the city flexibility on suspending local ordinances and spending for supplies, said City Administrator Matt Zimmerman. The apartment and condominium units most at risk are Willow Woods, Willow Heights, Quincy Park, River

Trails and Country Pines.

Prospect Heights Mayor Rodney Pace lauded the cooperation between the two communities. "We're hopefully ahead of the game, and hopefully we can keep people from getting wet," Pace said.

The sandbag work has gotten help from a host of volunteers, including Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and volunteer firefighters. The Cook County community work release program also sent helpers, Pace said.

"Everybody's really coming out to save both cities," Pace said.

At the Prospect Heights Public Works facility Monday afternoon, about a dozen Prospect Heights firefighters were steadily filling sand bags, loading them onto pallets which were carried by truck to the site of the berm on River Road. Morale was high and the men joked among themselves.

Some of the firefighters were still on duty, said Lt. Tom Siwik, "So if we get a call, we still have to go."

## **Levee missed**

For 10 years, officials in several northwest suburban communities have been lobbying to have the Levee 37 project finished by the Army Corps of Engineers. The levee project, which would build a permanent wall up to 6 feet tall between the river and River Road, has been delayed by lack of a water storage area upstream.

The mayors of both communities agreed that the incoming crest of water demonstrates the need for more flood protection. State legislators have passed, but the governor has not yet signed, a bill that would create a countywide storm management system to coordinate flood

control programs.

"If Levee 37 had been built we probably wouldn't be sandbagging at all," Zimmerman said.

U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk, (R-10th) convened a meeting of local officials for Monday night at the Hyatt Deerfield to discuss flood issues. Mayor Pace said he expected Levee 37 to be at the top of the list of issues.

"I've kept telling the authorities and anybody who would listen that [a flood] would happen again," Farley said. "It looks like this could be the time."

"It's amazing how, when the sun starts shining, how quickly people forget" about floods, Farley said. "We won't let them forget."

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